

10 Great Places to Stop Along the Highway

Assessing the quality of highway rest stops isn't of utmost importance for most trip planners. But once you're on the road and you need one, well, you need one. Gerald and Sharon Hammon, retirees from Benson AZ, have meticulously studied hundreds in 6 Western states, published in 2 volumes called *Rest Area Review* (Bremo Press, \$14.95 each). And their book rating roadside pit stops in the Northwest (Newjoy Press) is due the summer of 2002. Here are 10 western rest areas worth stopping for, with notes from Gerald.

Trinidad

*Off Highway 101, north of
Trinidad CA*

Located half a mile south of Patrick's Point State Park, "both the highway and the rest area are stunningly beautiful. You're in the red-woods and looking off these jagged cliffs at the coast. For scenic beauty, it's near the top of the list."

Forest Learning Center

*Route 504 en route to
Mount St. Helens WA*

The road to this volcanic peak hosts 4 information centers; the first doubles as a rest area. Open 10 AM to 6 PM from mid-May through

October, the rest area/learning center is jointly operated by the state and Weyerhaeuser Industries, which sponsors several elaborate exhibits on forests. Outside is a volcano-themed playground, interpretive trails, and viewing scopes. "It's spectacularly beautiful with a distant view of the mountain."

No Name/Grizzly Creek/ Bair Ranch

*Off I-70, east of
Glenwood Springs CO*

These 3 rest areas, just miles apart in Glenwood Canyon, are popular among rafters floating down the Colorado River. "Facilities are limited, but if you were traveling with kids, you could let them out, and they could walk along the river and meet you at the next stop."

Texas Canyon

*Off I-10, between Benson and
Willcox AZ*

This rugged country is in the heart of what was the Apaches' final stronghold in the 1870s. It remains isolated, even along this stretch of interstate, where "it looks like somebody took big chunks of molten rock and tossed them all over the place."



Stop Along the Highway (*continued*)

Vista Point

Off Route 212, 20 miles south of Red Lodge MT

The Beartooth Highway winds through the mountains of the same name, reaching dizzy elevations of 10,000+ feet. "It's not for people with phobias about height." Nor is this rest stop — with its recycling toilets — particularly plush. "But there are killer views. We watched a herd of elk on the other side of the canyon when we were there."

Harris Beach

Off Route 101, a half-mile north of Brookings OR

This area 10 miles north of the California border has beach access. It's next to Harris Beach State Park and a good spot for whale- and bird-watching. "It's landscaped like a botanical garden, with picnic tables under the trees. It's a heck of an introduction to Oregon."

San Rafael Swell

Off I-70 between exits 114 and 147, central UT

Driving east across the badlands of the San Rafael Swell, the "instinct is to put pedal to the metal and get to Moab as fast as you can." But while the facilities are rudimentary at these rest areas, the scenery is anything but. "The views off this uplift are spectacular; the shades of rock, surrealistic."

719 and 720 Reference Markers

Route 77, 6 miles south of Sarita TX

Birder alert: The tropical parula, a warbler rarely spotted north of the border, nests

among the trellises and vines at this pit stop in the center of a divided highway. Avid birders flock here, though "there are really no other redeeming features other than it's near South Padre Island."

Chugwater

Off I-25 at exit 54, near Chugwater WY

The town gets its distinctive name from the sound bison made as American Indians drove them off a nearby bluff into the creek below. "It's a nice rest area, though in the grand scheme of things it won't win awards for beauty. But it has a nice tie-in to history."

Donner Summit

Off I-80, west of Truckee CA

The summit is named for the ill-fated Donner party, 47 of whom perished in the winter of 1846-47 on their trek west. These days, it's considerably smoother going as you zip over the pass along I-80. And you'd be remiss not to pull over at this rest area to enjoy the view, have a picnic, or stretch your legs on the nearby Pacific Crest Trail.

